

2.

D^r. Dawson was the Author of numerous Works, controversial & philosophical, the chief of the latter description, was *Philologia Anglicana*, or "Philological & Synonymical Dictionary of the English Language," 1006, which, however, he did not complete. He died 1814, aged 85.

1748
Amford's Coffee House
Jan 7th 1748
THE
NECESSITARIAN:

OR

THE QUESTION CONCERNING
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY
STATED AND DISCUSSED,

IN XIX LETTERS.

By BENJAMIN DAWSON, LL.D.

Rector of BURGH, in *Suffolk.*

"WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT."

LONDON:

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MDCCLXXXIII.

IN THE SUPREMACY

THE SUPREMACY CONCERNING

IN THE SUPREMACY CONCERNING

STATUTE AND DECISION



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MDCCLXXXIII.



T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE Church of *England*, in her tenth Article, has reprobated the doctrine of FREE-WILL. Many Clergymen notwithstanding, who have solemnly subscribed their assent and consent to the Thirty-nine Articles, dare publickly to assert, and zealously endeavour to defend that doctrine, as agreeable to Reason and Scripture. Shall we blame them for this avowed deviation in sentiment from their Subscription — this manifest contrariety to their Engagement to

2 teach

teach according to the established Formulary?—For exercising their reason in search of sound Doctrine, and for interpreting Scripture according to the best of their judgement we cannot justly blame them. They have a *right* to do this; nay, it is a *duty* incumbent upon them. But then — Is it not to be regretted, that there should ever have been—still more so, that there should *continue* to be—a *legal* Barrier in the way of a *natural* right, an undoubted duty?—

The above reflection might be thought to appear somewhat impertinently in the front of a Philological disquisition, were I not to inform my Reader, that this Disquisition originated from a Theological debate concerning the Articles of the Church. The Xth and XVIIth were selected as instances of *absurd* and *pernicious* doctrine.—

“ Give

P R E F A C E.

v

“ Give up my *Freedom of Will!*” says One in the company. “ I will as soon give up
“ my Christianity. For I cannot believe
“ *that* to be a divine revelation which fa-
“ vours the principles of Fatalism and Ne-
cessity.”

In vain was it urged, that Fatalism and Necessity were to be distinguished—that the *Fatalist* denies any difference in the *formal* nature of actions, any foundation laid in the human frame for *moral* government, and consequently any obligation upon Man, more than upon the Brutes, to *moral* conduct; all which the *Necessitarian*, in perfect consist-
ence with his principles, admits and con-
tends for—that the doctrine of *Free-will* (if by that term we are to understand an *inde-
pendent* power in Man, a Will *absolute* and *unsubjected* to the over-ruling Will of God)

is

is nearer akin to *fatalism*, than this prompt Arminian and his ardent Abettors seemed to be aware of. In vain was it farther urged, that they misrepresented, because they mistook, and had not sufficiently informed themselves of the true Calvinistic doctrine on this head, and that in the mean time, there appeared a want of candour in *supposing* that the Church could possibly mean to set forth such pernicious, nay impious doctrine as they considered this to be. All went for nothing, or rather tended to something worse than nothing, so long as the Church and her Authority were in view. A proposal was accepted, to drop all reference to them, and to remove the argument from consecrated ground (where, if *Decency* would admit the contest, one side might seem to be taken at a disadvantage) to the open field of Philosophy.

This

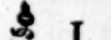
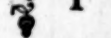
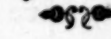
This turned the conversation more directly on the Question of *Human Liberty and Necessity*; and that conversation terminated in the following *Epistolary Correspondence*, which exhibiting, as the Author thinks, a just state of the Controversy, is now published with a view of shewing, how far the determination of it depends upon a proper explanation and right understanding of the *Terms* made use of, and how far the interests of *Religion* and *Morality* are affected by the one Scheme or the other.

T H E



LETTER I.

Philemon to Cleanthes.

 HAVE resolved, *Cleanthes*, never more
 I  in company to dispute with you the
 truth of the Necessitarian scheme. I
am not going to charge you with having argued
unfairly at our last meeting, though I hope to
convince you, that the advantage then gained
over me was owing to something else than to the
strength of your arguments. In conversation so
many foreign circumstances may give success to a
disputant—an uncommon flow of spirits at the
time—quickness of recollection—readiness at re-
partee—volubility of speech—ease of expression
—dignity of address, and I must not omit to add
that *animation* which he receives, if he imagine
5 B the

the company relishes what he says, or if he observe his antagonist a little disconcerted.

You know very well what has occasioned this last remark. How spirited was your conversation the moment you perceived me at a loss and *Eutropius*, who had so warmly seconded me, inclined to doubt!—The day was your's I must confess, *Cleanthes*. But as yet you have obtained no spoils to grace a triumph. *Eutropius* is free still, and tells me that, if he was surprized into certain concessions by the subtlety of your reasoning, he is now, upon viewing the *consequences* of your scheme, farther than ever from yielding his assent to it. You raised doubts in his mind. But they have only served to lead him into so strict an examination of your sentiments as to convince him, how dangerous it would be to harbour the like. In short, *Cleanthes*, he is affrighted at himself, when he considers how near he was being betrayed by your *Metaphysics* into a scheme “so full of contradiction” (they are his own words) “to common sense and feeling; and so dangerous in its tendency, leading directly to the subversion of all religion and morality.” I would have him be wiser still, and wait with me the issue of our
epistolary

epistolary correspondence. He is not, I tell him, sufficiently aware, how much the best cause in the world may be injured in loose conversation.

Will you favour me then, *Cleanthes*, with a correspondence of this nature?—Will you patiently submit to hear my difficulties, and satisfy me (if this be possible) of the consistency of your notions with the obligations of Man to religion and morality. You will greatly oblige me by an immediate notice of your compliance with this request of

Your's, &c.

PHILEMON.

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L E T T E R II.

Cleanthes to Philemon.

DO You intend then to engage seriously in this dispute, *Philemon*?—Can a NECESSITARIAN produce any arguments in defence of his Scheme worth a grave refutation?—Your resolution and request indeed leave me no room to doubt you begin to think so. You *begin*, I say. For hitherto you have only laughed or railed at it. And You of all people have the least reason to observe—“In conversation so many *foreign* circumstances may give success to a Disputant”—seeing you are the very person possessed of those advantages (and, I must add, you have availed yourself of them many times unfairly) which, you would hint, gave me success; while you cannot be ignorant, that the want of them has subjected me to many of your severe as well as humorous remarks.

But you happened to be *disconcerted*; and this gave me a certain *animation*, you observe, which
 advantaged

advantaged my cause more than strength of argument. It pleased me, I own, to see my witty antagonist once humbled, *once* suffering what I had *so often* suffered from him.

But *what*, let me ask, occasioned your being disconcerted?—Was it any quibbling, or unfair way of arguing on my part?—You acquit me of this in your letter. Was it some severe repartee, or some witty turn upon any of your expressions that had this effect?—You know very well, that wit is not my talent, and that in all philosophical debates I study more than any one in the company (your grave *Second* not excepted) to use the plainest language and the most familiar instances to illustrate my meaning.

In short, *Philemon*, was your confusion owing to any thing but a conviction at the time, that what I urged was *Truth*?—You perceived that, if you answered at all to the alternative which I proposed, you would soon be forced to acknowledge, that the Will is necessarily determined by Motives.

Be this as it may, I accept with great pleasure your offer of an epistolary correspondence; yet not without insisting upon your altering the method

thod in which you propose we should proceed. You would have me “patiently hear your difficulties, and satisfy you, if possible, of the consistency of my notions with the obligations of Man to Religion and Morality”*——

This were to begin at the wrong end, *Philemon*, as I have often told you, and to transgress the just laws of philosophizing. A Philosopher is in search of *Truth*, and is not afraid to find, or to follow her wherever she shall lead him. You fear the *consequences* of my Scheme. You have no business to inquire into them *yet*. Your apprehension about them serves only to prejudice you against the Scheme, which your concern for religion and morality themselves should not do. Let even so good a prejudice be subject to Truth. And let our enquiry be in the *first* place—Which of the two schemes is the *true* one?——

If you will set out in search of *this*, and continue to be as serious as you are—all of a sudden—become, you may depend upon my receiving what you have to offer on the subject with a mind open to conviction, and upon my answering with my usual plainness.

CLEANTHES.

L E T T E R III.

From *Philemon*.

I CANNOT charge my Friend with any unfairness, and perhaps deserve his censure for the freedom with which I have treated his arguments. You will not however, *Cleanthes*, insist upon my offering an apology for it after this acknowledgment and the promise which I now make you, to be serious to the end.

You propose we shall enquire, first of all—
“ Whether your scheme be *true* or not?—This you recommend as more philosophical than to begin with the consequences, and deduce the truth or falshood of it from *them*.

But can that be true from whence the most absurd and pernicious consequences flow?—If these be obvious, is not the falshood of the Scheme apparent?—And how is it possible for my concern for religion and morality to lead me wrong in this enquiry, that you advise me to let even so good a *prejudice* (so you term it) be subject to Truth?—
Or

Or what is truth worth, without *these*?—If these have no foundation in nature, Why be concerned for Truth, or afraid of Error?—Vain indeed then is all Philosophy!

I know, *Cleanthes*, You have as great a concern for the interest of religion and morality as any man, notwithstanding the bold manner in which you always express yourself. In this confidence therefore, as you insist upon your plan of proceeding, I comply rather than drop the correspondence, and shall trouble you as little as possible with my apprehensions of the fatal *tendency* of your notions, till I have your leave to make my objections to it.

To begin this Inquiry then, and in order to proceed in it with clear and distinct ideas of each other's meaning, You are desired, *Cleanthes*, to inform me in your next—In what extent I am to understand your doctrine of NECESSITY—Whether you are a NECESSITARIAN in the *strictest* sense, or only deny *absolute* Freedom of Will, and admit that there may be “*some degree* of Free-will” in Man; which a certain Author*, who labours

* SOAME JENNINGS, Esq; as generally supposed.

labours to justify the doctrine and reconcile it with the most consistent notions of religion and virtue, yet finds himself, in order to this end, under a necessity to admit*.

PHILEMON.

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* "That God made Man *perfectly* free is no less false. Men have certainly such a *degree* of Free-will as to make them accountable, and justly punishable, for the abuse of it: But *absolute* and *independent* Free-will is what, I believe no created Being can be possessed of."

Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil. 3d edit. p. 99.

"What then could infinite Wisdom, Justice and Goodness do in this situation more consistent with itself, than to call into being Creatures formed with such depravity in their dispositions, as to induce many of them to act in such a manner as to render themselves proper subjects for such necessary sufferings, and yet at the same time indued with such a *degree* of Reason and *Free will* as to put it in the power of every Individual to escape them by their good behaviour."

Ibid. p. 103, 104.

L E T T E R IV.

From *Cleanthes*.

IT is very proper, *Philemon*, in all debates to proceed, as you propose, “with clear and “distinct ideas of each others meaning.” To prevent your mistaking mine therefore, I must, before I make my answer to your question, remind you of what you have often in our conversation on this subject heard me observe—That the NECESSITARIAN denies not *Free-agency* in Man. He allows, What a man doth *voluntarily*, he doth *freely*. The act is his own, and not another man’s. He doth as he will; and in *that* consists his Liberty or Freedom.

But this sort of Liberty satisfies you not. You say—Unless the *Will itself* be free, there can be no Liberty; And you make the freedom of the Will to consist in this—That it is not *necessarily* influenced, at least, not necessarily *determined* by Motives. According to *this* idea of human liberty, I profess myself a NECESSITARIAN *omnibus partibus*,

partibus, utterly denying *such* freedom of Will. I will not call in any *degree* of it, as the Author you refer to has done, (but, *Philemon*, let us have nothing to do with *Authors*—The dispute is between ourselves) to patch up the doctrine of NECESSITY into a consistence with religion and morality. I except no part of the human conduct. Natural, civil, moral, religious behaviour—all is acknowledged to be necessary, and in the *same degree*. Thus you have my answer frankly and without reserve.

But is it not proper also, *Philemon*, seeing the word *Will* must so often occur in this inquiry, to fix the sense in which we are to use it?—The idea which I affix to it is—*A POWER in Man of CHUSING to ACT, forbear action, or continue action.*

You may remember that your friend *Eutropius* used to quibble upon this Definition, saying, “that the very terms of it implied Freedom of Will; for that every Power was an *active* power, and a *necessary* Power was a contradiction in terms.” In like manner he would argue against the doctrine of NECESSITY from the very meaning of the words—*Action* and *Agency*—and from the impropriety of affixing the epithet—*Necessary*—to them.

But this is arguing only about *words*, and is not in proof of the *thing* itself in dispute. The Question is not concerning the propriety of the language, but whether actions are free in the sense in which alone he and yourself will admit them to be free. And therefore remember once for all, *Philemon*, that in asserting all things to be *necessary*, whether powers, actions, agents, or aught else, it is not that I think such language proper, but because you will not allow any thing to be free on my scheme. Every *voluntary* act I account a *free* act; because it proceeds from the *Will*, from the Man himself, and not from any external mechanical force; in which case I should say, the man was under a *necessity* to act, or did not act *freely*, and of himself. But then I call that voluntary act, *necessary*, in conformity to *your* idea of Necessity, who, on supposition of the Will being determined by motives, will not allow it to be free though voluntary.

That we may not therefore suffer this to become a dispute about Words, You will let me know in your next, whether you think you understand me, and how far you agree with me in the ideas
you

you affix to the terms generally made use of in treating this Question. When we have settled these preliminaries, you may begin the attack, as soon as you please, upon your Opponent

CLEANTHES.

LET-

L E T T E R V.

From *Philemon*.

I WELL remember, *Cleanthes*, your pretension to FREE-AGENCY, and insisting upon the propriety of the Term upon your own principles. But still you must excuse my thinking with *Eutropius* and the rest of the Company, that it is unreasonable for one of your principles to class himself among Free-agents. What, though you call *voluntary* actions, *free* actions, and doing as you *will*, acting with *freedom*?—This is only borrowing a name, to save appearances and cover your Scheme from that infamy which you are sensible would otherwise fall upon it. For it is only pressing you a little closer, and demanding—Whether you acknowledge that, in any instance of doing as you will, you could have done otherwise—that is—could have *willed* to have done otherwise; and your freedom is gone; And so should your Pretence to it. For by denying that you could have *willed* to do otherwise, you deny
human

human LIBERTY; And whatever you may call yourself, you are according to *my* idea of the word—a NECESSITARIAN.

I have no objection to your Definition of the human Will. It agrees exactly with my own idea of it. And though the terms of it seem to favour the cause of Liberty, yet I must own your remark on my friend's manner of arguing from them to be just. It was arguing from the mere *sound* of words. And believe me, *Cleanthes*, I am not disposed to play with words. The importance of the subject affects me too much; nor have I any other aim in this dispute, than to come at the Truth, or to vindicate it, if I am already possessed of it. The strong terms too, in which you declare your Faith in the doctrine of NECESSITY, would make any one grave who reflects on the consequence. You except “no part of the human conduct. Natural, civil, *moral*, *religious* behaviour—*All* is acknowledged to be necessary, and in the *same degree*.” If this be so, farewell to all——. But I remember my promise. I am not to trouble you with my reflections on *consequences*, but to consider the *Scheme itself*.

My

My first argument then (and if you can refute it, *Cleanthes*, I think not to trouble you with another) is drawn from *my own experience and feeling*. I have the testimony of my own mind for Free-agency. Reflecting on this very act of writing to my friend, I *experience* Freedom of Will herein. I find in myself a power of doing it, or of omitting it. Not only is the act *voluntary*, flowing from the will; but the *Will itself* is free, and not necessarily determined by any motive. True it is, my motives for the action are, the Pleasure I take in such a correspondence, and the Desire of information. But these, though they *influence*, do not *necessarily determine* my Will. On the contrary, I find a power within me of resisting them. I could forego this pleasure and this advantage which I hope to receive from the correspondence, and pursue it no farther. This indeed would be disagreeable to me, and very foolish. But that I am *capable* of acting thus, and have *such a power*, whenever I should think fit to exert it so absurdly, I am *conscious* of it, as I am of any thing whatever.

So, in reflecting on all *moral* actions, I find in my constitution this same principle of *Free-will*;
and

and which indeed is the ground of all moral approbation and disapprobation—of all merit and demerit in actions. I recollect a charitable office done to my Neighbour. In great distress he applied to me for a certain sum of money, which would enable him to satisfy a hasty Creditor. I complied with his request. Might I not have refused?—Yes, surely—Or else the action could not have been *charitable*. Nor could it furnish my mind with the pleasing reflection of having done well, if I could not have done otherwise.

• This very Consciousness of moral rectitude and depravity is to me a plain proof of human Liberty. For Conscience never applauds or condemns us for such actions as we consider ourselves under a *necessity* to perform; nor do we censure or praise others for the like. Approbation and Blame are consequent upon *free* actions alone. We have no sense of Merit and Demerit, where we have no feeling of *Liberty*; And my own Conscience, while it reproaches me for any fault, informs me that I *might* have done otherwise—yea, and that, if the like temptation should occur, I could now resist it.

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Here,

Here, *Cleanthes*, I had thought to have concluded my letter. But since I wrote the above, what follows has occurred to me in re-examining the argument; And as I take it to be a confirmation of the justness of it, I will beg your attention to it.

To shew you then, *Cleanthes*, that *Free-Will* is necessarily involved in our very notions of virtue and vice, merit and demerit, let us consider—What Beings are capable of these, and in what degree. For to me it is evident, that no Beings are capable of virtue and vice but what are endued with *free-will*; and that Actions are praise or blame-worthy, more or less in proportion to that degree of *free-will* from whence they proceed.

To begin with the lowest class of Beings—those which are wholly *inanimate*—Do we attribute merit or demerit to any of these?—And why not, but because they are not *free* agents?—They are *passive*. The good or evil, which they produce to mankind, comes not from them of *choice*, but of *necessity*. The husbandman thinks not of returning thanks to the *Showers* which fructify his grounds, nor to the *Sun* which by its genial influences
bringeth

bring th his crops, in their respective seasons, to full maturity; Or, to engage even his rustic simplicity in so great an absurdity, these blessings must be personified, and he taught to consider them as animated Beings and *free* agents. His gratitude may *thus* indeed, through the power of poetical fiction, be excited towards them, and lead him to worship the one under the name of *Jove*, and the other, of *Apollo*.

It is for the same reason that we attribute no merit or demerit to any piece of Mechanism. A Watch, or Clock, how curious soever the workmanship may be, and its movements ever so just and regular, yet can never excite in us such approbation as we experience in contemplating a virtuous character. Why?—Because it regulates not its own Motions. They are necessarily dependent upon the materials of which it is composed and the direction of the ingenious Artist. Such as it is, it *necessarily* is; nor can it move otherwise than as it doth. Consisting of such materials, and being under such a direction, it must of *necessity* go right; and from that very necessity under which it acts it is incapable of being an object of moral approbation.

But put the case now—that this just and regular movement was properly *its own*. Imagine this Machine endued with life and volition, by which it regulated its motions thus exactly for the service and benefit of mankind, having at the same time a *power within itself* of stopping, or varying them to the prejudice and deception of mankind; No sooner, I say, do we suppose this *Free-will* within it, than it becomes an object of moral approbation. It would *then* merit our esteem and regard, and, like all other free Agents who exert their liberty in our favour, demand our gratitude itself.

Suppose now, *vice versa*, Free-agency struck out of the human frame, and every motion of the mind and will of Man to be as *necessary* as that of a Clock or Watch; Doth he not immediately cease to be considered as virtuous or vicious? Is he any longer an object of our approbation or blame?—We may call him a *good* or a *bad* man, as we call it a *good* or a *bad* watch. - But these terms applied to Beings under an *equal necessity*, can imply no moral approbation or blame in the one more than in the other.

Let

Let us now view this matter in an instance from the *animal* creation.

All Beings of this class, below the dignity of human nature, are confessedly incapable of religion and morality. And why?—Not because they want Wills, or cannot do as they *will*; but because their Wills are not, as the human Will, *free*, but *necessary*—necessarily influenced, or determined by a necessity of their own nature.

The Horse, that most useful and excellent of all the other animals in the brute creation, whatever services he renders us by his swiftness, or his strength; or how much soever we may admire him for his beauty, true motion, manageableness, &c. yet never gains from us *that* esteem and approbation which is engaged by much inferior services and qualities of our fellow-creatures: Nor on the other hand, how much soever we may be provoked with his untowardness, and (as we call them) *vicious* pranks, do we consider these faults in the same light we do the disobedience of a Servant. Because the latter is a *free-agent*. His disobedience proceeds from his own *free* choice. He might have done otherwise. It was *in his power* to have ruled his own spirit and the motions of
his

his Will in conformity to his Master's commands. And therefore we can tell him so, expostulate with him and convince him of his fault, upon *his own experience* of this power within himself. Whereas the former is a *necessary* agent. His disobedience we consider as constitutional—as a *necessary* consequence of his spirit and temper. He labours under a natural *incapacity* of doing otherwise, than as he is prompted by such strong impulse of nature as *cannot* be resisted.

Therefore it is, we neither attribute moral blame to him, nor think of amending and subduing him to our will by any other methods, than such as, from his nature, may *necessarily* influence and determine him. By a proper application of the spur and lash this is sometimes effected. But, in this amendment, we attribute no merit to the Horse.—Because it was brought about through the influence of Fear *necessarily* and unavoidably operating upon his *Will* (if I may give it that appellation); or if he is broke by more gentle treatment and kinder usage, yet still, because he wants this principle of *free-will*, so essential to constitute a moral agent, we consider not this obedience as any *moral* excellence in the creature. It is still only the
force

force and working of nature aided by external art. The improvement is just as *necessary*, as that which is made upon a *Watch* or *Clock* by polishing and cleansing its works, and readjusting its parts; or as necessary as the improvement of a barren piece of *Ground* and the increase of the crop upon it under the labours of the husbandman.

In all these instances there is no *liberty* nor any *freedom* of action, properly speaking. The Productions of the earth are *necessarily* consequent on the quality of the Soil. This again is necessarily consequent on the labours of the Husbandman and the Materials of the tillage. The movement of the *Watch* *necessarily* depends on the position of its parts, and that position, on the ingenuity of the Artist. It is the same in the case of the Horse. His movements are *necessarily* dependent on the improved state of his temper—his present gentle Disposition; This again *as necessarily*, on his original frame and bent of Nature improved by the art of his Manager.

So that you see, *Cleanthes*, an action consequent on the Will is not *therefore* free, unless the *Will* itself be free. Nor doth it matter—according to the notion of Freedom and Necessity—that you say,
“ the

“ the action is free, *because it proceeds from the creature itself* and not *ab extra*, as in mere Mechanism*.” For if it *necessarily* result from such a particular constitution, principles, or motives, that action is *absolutely* necessary—as much so, as the action of one piece of Matter upon another—as necessary as the falling of a Stone to the earth by the force of Gravity : And consequently the Agent, whether human or brutal, if his actions or sentiments, be under this *necessity*, is *equally* void of merit—equally incapable of virtue or vice.

Accordingly, *Cleanthes*,—to come now to the human Species—We never attribute merit or demerit to any man but *in proportion* to that freedom of will, of which we suppose him to be possessed. A man, whose natural constitution makes Liquour no temptation to him, seldom drinks to excess. Pray, what great virtue do you esteem this kind of Temperance ?—We look upon him to be almost under a *necessity* to be temperate ; And although this abstinence proceeds from *his own Will* and not from any force *ab extra*, yet don’t you see, how our approbation of this voluntary act

act is lessened by the consideration of its approaching so near to *necessity*?—

For Contemplate an act of abstinence in another person, whom you suppose to lie, from natural constitution, under the strongest temptation to indulge to sensuality. Will you not own, that this act commands your approbation more than the other?—Why?—but because this act is farther removed from *necessity*. The constitution of the man doth not *necessarily* incline him this way but rather the other. He exerts his *freedom*—his *own free-will*—in opposition to his strong, natural propensity to liquour, and so overcomes the temptation. He finds within himself a power of resisting, by a *free act* of the will, his natural propensity which, though it *influenceth*, greatly *influenceth*, his will, yet—contrary to your hypothesis—doth not *necessarily determine* it.

In short he feels within himself a power of acting *either* way, without a præpollent motive necessarily impelling the Will: And this very *Feeling* of liberty, which in such a stout moral resistance, must be very strong, is the foundation of self-applause, and constitutes the moral excellence of the act.

On the other hand, *Cleanthes*, Do we not make allowance for him, if he happen to be overtaken with, and yield to a temptation of this kind?—Do we not reckon him the less culpable on account of this natural infirmity, bordering so near upon *Necessity*?—While we view with contempt, instead of pity, and make little allowance for the like irregularity in the other man, who labours not under such an unhappy bias of nature; And he himself, no doubt, for this abuse of his *greater degree* of free-will, suffers the more from the reproaches of his own mind.

I shall trouble you with one illustration more of this matter——A villain comes upon me unawares, and, without so much as demanding my purse, knocks me down and takes it from me unable to make any resistance. In this case it is plain, I am altogether *passive*, and consequently under an *absolute necessity* of suffering the robbery. To one under this necessity, to whom not so much as agency at all, either *free* or *necessary*, can be attributed, and whose inaction, or non-resistance, is *involuntary*, no merit or demerit can be attributed. If I had tamely suffered my money to be taken from me unjustly, and where I was in a capacity of pre-

preventing it without certain danger to myself, I might have deserved blame. But in such a case of absolute *necessity*, and upon that very account, no blame can be imputed to me ; nor any merit, for the same reason.—To vary the case——

Suppose me to deliver my purse to a Highwayman who, with a pistol at my breast, threatens instant death in case of refusal. I am, in this case, an *Agent* indeed, but not a *free Agent*—that is—Though I *chuse* to comply rather than be murdered, yet my Will is not *free* but necessarily *determined* by the motive of fear. I *feel* this determination of the mind ; and in consequence of this feeling of *necessity*, or at least, of something next to necessity, the action is unattended with any degree of moral approbation or blame.

But let us suppose now that, instead of a highwayman, a *Creditor* makes his demand upon me for the like sum, and I comply in conformity to the law of the land. The act, you observe, *Cleantes*, begins now to assume a *moral* appearance. The reason is—I find myself more *at liberty* in this case. I could refuse payment, and break through the obligation. And yet, as he hath lawful security for payment, and could enforce the penalty

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against

against me, it is but the *lowest* degree of approbation, which attends this act of bare justice in rendering to him his due.

Take away now this obligation of the law, and suppose it paid where legal security has not been demanded :—The Act, freed from that restraint, rises in moral estimation. I am now under the influence of a conscientious principle alone, and therefore finding myself at greater *liberty* to act either way, honestly or dishonestly, the part I chuse to act is *proportionably* praise-worthy.

Suppose my Will yet *more* at liberty, and that I give this money where I am bound neither by law, nor yet in conscience, but out of pure good will to serve a friend or neighbour in distress— which is coming to the case put towards the beginning of this Epistle—Can any one conscious of such an act be devoid at the same time of a most agreeable reflection upon it ?—And must not every person, in the contemplation of such an humane act, regard the benefactor with a much greater degree of complacency, than he would in contemplating the same act under any of the afore-mentioned degrees of *necessity* ?—Once more,——

Suppose

Suppose even this gentle restraint, or rather this gentle *influence* upon the Will—of Friendship, or Compassion—removed, and that the money was given where there was the least obligation to give it, even to relieve the distress of an inveterate *Enemy*; And the Act rises almost to something divine, both in the pleasure it yields to the Agent on reflection, and the reverence and respect it gains from others.

And now, *Cleanthes*, my thus endeavouring to give you a more distinct idea of my meaning and train of thinking on this subject, must be my apology for the length of this Letter, and the tedious manner of my instancing.

PHILEMON.

LET.

L E T T E R VI.

From *Cleanthes*.

YOU have fixed upon an Argument, *Philemon*, which if it be not the strongest in favour of FREE-WILL, is certainly the most difficult to be refuted. I wonder not therefore at your saying—"if I can refute it, you think not to trouble me with another." There will be no occasion indeed, *Philemon*, for your using more arguments, if this be not solid. For to disprove it I must convince you, that you have not a Consciousness or Experience of FREE-WILL, This however I will attempt; And if I shall succeed, I make no doubt you will perceive, that in reality you experience just the *contrary*—NECESSITY of Will.

A very difficult undertaking, you will say, this is!—Nay, impossible, you may think!—to disprove to himself a man's own feelings, of which he must needs be very sure and a perfect judge!

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The difficulty I am very sensible of; And perhaps it will prove impossible for *me* to convince you. But that you or any person, in reflecting upon what passeth in his own mind, may be mistaken, is most certain, and very evident from hence, *viz.* that our sentiments concerning the internal objects of reflection, concerning our perceptions and feelings themselves, do sometimes *change*.

I well remember, *Philemon*, once thinking (and being extremely positive of it too) as you do—that I experienced freedom of Will. I now think otherwise. I have been under a mistake therefore, or am so now. A mere appeal to ones own experience, in a case of *this nature*, should not be considered as decisive. Because it appears, that one may be *mistaken* about this Experience, and may *fancy* an Experience which doth not *exist*. We are therefore still to enquire,—Whether your reflections upon the operations of your mind be *just*; or Whether what you have alledged *prove* an Experience of Free-will or Free-agency, in *that* sense, Remember! (or we shall dispute about words) in which you take those Terms. For I deny

deny not *Free-agency* in man in the only proper sense of the Word.

You “ have the testimony of your own mind,” you say, “ for *Free-agency* ;” and you produce the following as an instance of it——“ Reflecting “ on this very act of writing to my friend, I experience Freedom of will herein. I find in “ myself a power of *doing* it, or of *omitting* it.”

Now, I will endeavour to shew you, *Philemon*, that you had *not* a power of omitting this act, and consequently that you did it of *necessity*——

For

I. You own, that you was *disposed* to write to your Friend. You mention the *motives*. You call the act *voluntary*. When therefore you *reflected* upon it (but by the way, as you plainly refer to the time *before* the act was done, your meaning would have been more properly expressed——“ In considering what I am now *about* to do,” &c.) You acknowledge yourself to be conscious of a *Will to do* it. But at the same time you assert a consciousness of a *Power to omit* it, or a power of resisting the motives to it ;—yea, “ as conscious (you say) you are of this, as of any thing whatsoever.*

Let us see then, What must be your meaning, when you assert, that you was conscious of a *power* to omit it, at the same time that you was conscious of a *will* to do it.

This Power, of which you was conscious, must be either a *voluntary* power of omission (that is to say—you was conscious you could omit it *of choice*;) or, it must be *involuntary* (that is to say—you was conscious you *could* omit it, but the omission would not be *of choice*.)

If it be the *latter* you mean; Then, supposing you to have omitted it, as that omission was not of *choice*—i. e.—did not proceed from the Will) for the *Will* we defined, a *power of choosing**) you was not, in that case, a FREE-AGENT; Free-agency, according to you, consisting in acting not only in consequence of *will*, but it must be *free-will* too.

And so, if this be all you was conscious of, it amounts to no more than this, *viz.* you was conscious that, though you found yourself disposed or willing to write, yet you was necessarily prevented from writing and pursuing your *choice*. You was conscious, that you was *willing* to write and *could* write (had a *physical* power of doing so);

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but was conscious at the same time of some obstruction, something which caused you to omit doing as you *would*.

This, I say, is all you was conscious of, supposing you to have omitted it. And this would be no Consciousness of FREE-WILL or FREE-AGENCY, but just the contrary. You had not therefore a *power*—a *free* power—of omitting to write, according to *one* of the two senses in which your assertion of such a power must be understood.

If it be the *other* sense in which you would be understood, *viz.* that you was conscious of a *voluntary* power of omitting to write—i.e.—that you could omit it of *choice*, then I say, you was conscious of *choosing* and *not* choosing to do one and the same thing at the same time. For if you was conscious of a will to write, you must be conscious of being *unwilling* to omit writing; And if you was conscious of being unwilling to omit writing, you must be conscious that, if you omitted it, the omission would be *involuntary*. And yet you say, you are conscious you could omit it, and that *voluntarily*, or of choice. But this, *Philemon*, is to be conscious of a *will* and *no* will, or of *choosing* and

and *not* chusing one and the same thing at one and the same time : which is impossible.

In neither of these senses therefore was you conscious of a power of omitting to write ; Nay, it appears, that you was conscious of just the reverse, *viz.* that you could not omit writing, unless *perforce*, or *against your will* ; which would have been *Necessity* according to every one's notion of the Word. You could not therefore but write, as nothing forced you to omit it.

II. Here, however you may say ; that though you was disposed or willing to write, yet you was conscious to yourself of a power to omit writing, or of a power to resist that inclination to write, *when-ever* you pleased, or thought proper to exert that power.

But this is only saying, That whenever you should please, chuse, or be willing to omit writing, you was conscious you could *then* omit it—i. e.—you was conscious you could then have laid down your pen in obedience to the *new* direction of the Will. And so you *might*. You have a most certain experience of *such* a power as this. And in this consists FREE-AGENCY according to *my* notion of it. But *you* will not allow this to be FREE-agency.

Agency, with you, is not FREE, merely because it proceeds from *the Will*, unless the Will *itself* is free; or as you explain yourself, unless one “could have *willed* to have done otherwise.” —And therefore you make the Question between us to be this, *viz.* Whether, when you pleased, chose, or willed to exert the power of writing to your friend, you could have *pleased, chosen, or willed* otherwise, *viz.* to omit the exertion thereof. And *such* a power as this, I think it has been demonstrated that you could not be conscious of; Nay, that you must be conscious of the *reverse*—That you have *not* such a power.

III. I think there is but one thing more which you can object to the above-reasoning, *viz.* You don't mean to assert, that you was conscious of being willing to write and unwilling *at the same time* or that you could write, and yet omit writing too at the same time, (which is confessedly contradictory) but only this, That though you made choice of writing, and *did* write, yet you was conscious of some Power within you, by which, *before* you had written, you could have *changed* your Will, or choice of writing, and so have omitted it.

Let us see then, Whether it be possible for such

a Power to exist as *this* is, of which you say you was conscious.

This Power is either a power of *the Will over itself*, or it is *not*. 1. If it be ; then this absurdity follows—You must have had *two contrary* Wills at the same time. For you had one Will, *viz.* to write. This Will, you say you had a power to change. But how was this change to be effected ? —By a power of *the Will*, you assert. So then, a change cannot be effected, *till* there shall be *a will* to change ; And so you must have *eternally* willed to write, unless you suppose, at the same time that this Will exists, *another* and *contrary* Will to exist, which can effect a change of the other Will. And thus you must have been conscious of *two* opposite Wills at the same time, or of the Will being engaged *two contrary ways* at once ; which is impossible, and is the very Contradiction which you might hope to avoid by your objection.

2. If you mean by this Power something *else* than the Will, You give up the point entirely. For then you acknowledge *another* Power in man capable of changing the direction of the Will, and of producing in you a quite contrary Will to that which you had before. But the Will thus
subjected

subjected to *another* Power (be that power the Intellect, Reason, Judgment, &c.) cannot be *free*, in your sense of the word; nor are Actions, though *voluntary*, to be esteemed *free*; seeing Freedom or Liberty of action, according to you, consists in *Free-will*; that is, in a Will remaining undetermined, though the strongest motives be presented to it.

I shall not consider any other part of your Letter at present. I want the road clear before me, as I proceed; and therefore must beg your patient attendance upon me through this thorny maze of Metaphysics, into which, you see, your own Argument unavoidably leads me.

I know you are in haste, *Philemon*, after the *Consequences* of the doctrine of NECESSITY. But let us possess ourselves, as Philosophers should do, of the *Truth* first, how troublesome soever be the path through which we are pursuing Her. For what are we doing, contemplating consequences without Her?—

You have asked, indeed * — “What is Truth worth, but for its *consequences*?”—Let me ask then What are the consequences of the best fancied Scheme worth, without *Truth* to support them?—What a mere amusement must it be to trace out

with accuracy, or indeed to demonstrate with the greatest certainty, the consequences which would flow from your scheme of *Liberty*, while it is uncertain that *such a liberty* exists!—

You may please yourself too, as much as your fancy will let you, with the perfect *consistency* of your Scheme with *Virtue* and *Piety*; Yet how empty and unsatisfactory!—how like a dream is this pleasure which you take, and how unworthy a philosophic mind to indulge, which after all may be founded in Error!—Let the doctrine of NECESSITY be ever so full (fuller it cannot be than you have many times represented it, *Philemon*,) of disagreeable *consequences*, if notwithstanding it be *true*, and *demonstratively true*, we may talk ever so long against it—We may wish what we will—We may please and amuse ourselves with ever so many fine views of the other Scheme; Our wishes are all vain—our language mere impertinence. Instead of truth and solid satisfaction we wantonly embrace error, and play about and divert ourselves in a paradise of fancy.

I must conclude this Letter with assuring you, *Philemon*, that the metaphysical reasoning I have made use of is occasioned by the nature of the Subject

Subject and your own definition of Liberty, and proceeds not from a desire of confounding the Question with subtle distinctions. And that we may *avoid* any confusion, I again remind you, that I am not disputing against *Free-agency* in that which I take to be the only *proper* sense of the term, *viz.* Acting in consequence of *Will*, or *voluntarily*. But I maintain, that there can be no *Free-agency* according to *your* explication of that term, *viz.* Acting under *Free-will*, or without a *determining* motive.

If I have any success in convincing you of your mistake in *this* instance—your own *consciousness* and *experience* of free-agency in the act of writing—I shall go on to consider the other parts of your Letter one by one, even to the *end*, if you may think it necessary. If on the other hand I receive conviction from what you have to say that I am in an error, there will be no occasion to consider them. Should this be the case however, I will do myself the justice to endeavour to convince you, that though I was in an error, I apprehended not those *bad consequences* from it, which you have asserted concerning it.

CLEANTHES.

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L E T T E R VII.

From *Philemon*.

YOU seem to be apprehensive, *Cleanthes*, that I should charge you with aiming to confound and perplex the Question in the subtilities of Metaphysics. It would be unjust to charge you with it. My Argument for LIBERTY founded on the feelings of my own mind, led you unavoidably into them; Nor was it possible to satisfy me of its inconclusiveness any other way, than by such an appeal to my own thoughts as might excite me to a careful review of the Operations of my own mind.

I say—the *inconclusiveness* of my Argument. For I will be ingenuous with you, *Cleanthes*, and confess myself unable to resist the force of your reasoning. I now find I have been deceived in imagining an Experience which it is *impossible* for any one to have. You have proved satisfactorily that, while I was conscious of a power to write to

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you, I could not be conscious at the *same* time of a power to omit writing—to omit it *voluntarily*. For this would imply the existence of *two contrary* Wills at the same time ; which is impossible.

All that I could be conscious of was, a power to omit writing on a *change* of Will. But that this Change of the Will could be effected by some power within me—some *voluntary* power or influence of which I was *then* conscious, I see the absurdity of maintaining. Something *external* to or *different* from the Will must arise to effect the change.

I must therefore quit that strong hold in which I thought myself so secure against the attacks of NECESSITARIANS, and acknowledge that this grand Argument from *experience* in favour of LIBERTY is inconclusive.

But do you think I should go further, *Cleanthes*, and acknowledge, in the room of Free-will, a real experience of NECESSITY?—For convinced, as I now am, that I have not a consciousness of Free-will, you make no doubt of my perceiving “that in reality I experience just the contrary.”

Let me examine myself a little on the confession

sion I have made. Let me see, whether the Conviction, which I have confessed, implies an actual experience of NECESSITY. — I am not conscious of Free-will; *Therefore* I experience the contrary—*Necessity* of will.—This, I am sure, is not a *just* and *regular* inference; Or if just, the connection at least whereby the reasoning is conclusive, doth not *appear*. This indeed I am fully convinced of—that, when I *will* to do a thing, I cannot be conscious of a power to change that Will. I can only be conscious of a physical power to act according to that will, and of a physical power also to act contrary thereto, *when* a change of the Will is effected. But, because I am not *conscious* of a power to change the Will, doth it therefore follow, that I *have* not a power to change it?—May there not be some hidden power within me of effecting this, which constitutes me a Free-agent, although it lie remote from *feeling* and *experience*.

No, say you, There cannot be such a Power*. For, if there be, it must either be *voluntary*,—i. e.—a Power of the Will over itself, or *involuntary*—i. e.—Something *external* to or *besides* the Will and operating upon it. The former suppo-

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sition is plainly absurd. The latter implies *necessity* or a necessary *determination* of the Will.

I am convinced, *Cleanthes*. The deduction of this Consequence is certain, is evident—There can be no FREE-WILL; Experience itself is against it. What follows I tremble to mention—There can be no Freedom in human Actions, no Moral agency, no difference between Virtue and Vice.—NECESSITY subverts every Principle of Morality and Religion, confounds all the Distinctions we make of actions and their qualities—of good and bad, right and wrong, virtuous and vicious, lawful and unlawful, pious and profane;—reduces the boasted dignity of the human, to the low degree of the brutal nature, and levels the actions, affections and principles of both with the motions of mere Mechanism.

You must allow me now (I can wait no longer for your leave) to vent my apprehensions of the fatal tendency of this Scheme. It is but a small satisfaction for the misery I endure under the belief of it. For it I have rejected an opinion which, however erroneous, (and however absurd it may seem to assert it) has supported the peace of my
own

own mind.—Oh! *Cleanthes*, this is too great a sacrifice to be made to Truth herself. I shall always think so, and wish to renounce her authority, till you have dispelled those frightful consequences under which she appears to me so deformed and hideous.

Yet, think not, *Cleanthes*, of soothing me in this distress of mind with a mere refinement on words, and the substitution of a more specious *Name* to this Scheme than all mankind are willing to allow it. Think not to persuade me, that Free-agency can be consistent with this necessary Determination of the Will. I may still call myself, as you do, a *free Being*—a *free Agent*. But alas! what sort of Freedom do we boast of, whose Wills are *over-ruled*, whose choice of things and actions is totally destroyed by this necessity of Will!

Your reminding me therefore of the sense in which you would chuse to understand FREE-AGENCY, and assuring me that you do not deny it in the *proper sense* of that Word, makes me fear you think it necessary to use this *refinement* on Terms, in order to gain my cordial attachment to your
opinion

opinion. But be assured, no refinements will do this. Forced as I find myself to confess the *Truth* of it, nothing can make me *love* it, or restore my peace of mind, but the Conviction that the foundations of *Morality* and *Religion* remain unshaken by this bold doctrine of *Necessity*.

In the mean time, I wait with impatience your answer to the remaining part of my last epistle, in considering which you will have an opportunity (if it be *possible* to be done) of giving me that satisfaction, on reviewing the *consequences* of my new Opinion, which I should despair of receiving from any other than the Person that has convinced me of the *truth* of the NECESSITARIAN Scheme.

PHILEMON.

LET-

L E T T E R V I I I .

From *Cleanthes*.

IT would look like an Insult upon my Friend, to congratulate him on the possession of Truth, while he is so much offended with Her. But why are you offended with Truth, *Philemon*?—Or, why wish to renounce her Authority?—

You will tell me—Because in finding Her you have found misery instead of happiness, affliction instead of comfort.

But let me ask you again—Whether this should be laid to the account of *Truth*? — For a true Opinion you have rejected a false one. And do you consider it as so great a misfortune, that you are at last *undeceived*?—Doth *this* afflict you?—Hath this bereft you of your peace of mind?—No, *Philemon*. Truth could not afflict you thus. For she is connatural with the human mind, and made to support its Peace. An erroneous Opinion support the peace of your mind!—A firm support truly!—which has given way on the first shock
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from sober reflection. For you must own, *Philemon*, till the commencement of this literary correspondence, you never seriously questioned the Ground of your Opinion.

But still you will tell me—You was easy and happy in your Error, and you find yourself unhappy under your present Conviction.—This is owing to *Error*, *Philemon*, not to *Truth*—to your misapprehension of the consequences of the NECESSITARIAN doctrine, as if it confounded all the distinctions we make between good and bad, virtue and vice, right and wrong. The same grand Error, which so much gratifies and emboldens the vicious FATALIST, afflicts my friend. This is to your honour, *Philemon*, as it shews the goodness of your heart, and your attachment to the Cause of Virtue and Religion. But let me now ask you—Are not Truth and Virtue *inseparable*?—Or can That which is founded in Truth have those frightful consequences which you have imagined?—This is questioning you in your own way. You are satisfied of the *truth* of the NECESSITARIAN doctrine. Ought you not to rest satisfied, that it must on that very account favour the interests of virtue and religion,

religion, and be attended with the happiest consequences, though you may not discern them?—

Such an argument as this, if I had nothing else to offer, would bring you little comfort, and hardly convince you of the consistency of the doctrine, to which you are a Convert, with the obligations of Man to religion and morality. And yet, by just such another argument you would have tried the merits of the Question between us. You would have begun with the *consequences*, and deduced the truth or falsehood from *them*. For “Can that, you ask, be true, from whence the most absurd and pernicious *consequences* flow!—If these be obvious, is not the falsehood of the scheme apparent?”—

What think you now, my Friend! — Is the falsehood of the NECESSITARIAN scheme apparent, which to you is obviously attended with absurd and pernicious consequences?—No, no, *Philemon*. You are convinced that it is true, notwithstanding the dreaded consequences. And should I find myself unable to convince you of its *Innocence*, as I have done of its *Truth*, you cannot reject it. Truths taken up through prejudice may be lost the same way. But Truths which the Mind has

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received

received from *demonstration* will remain there in spite of prejudice itself—

But you are unhappy under your conviction, and “wait with impatience” my attempt to obviate those difficulties attending the doctrine of NECESSITY, which make it appear so repugnant to the principles of morality and religion. If I can refute your reasoning “in the remaining part of “your Epistle*,” you think I shall succeed. Indeed I have little doubt of success in this matter, having succeeded so much sooner than I could expect in the much more arduous task of convincing you of a Truth you was so *unwilling* to admit.

The argument which you brought for FREE-WILL was your own *Experience* of it, as an instance of which experience, or consciousness, you mentioned the Act of writing to your friend. This has been refuted, and the instance shewn to be not only *insufficient*, but a proof to the *contrary*.

The next instance you give is, an Act of Charity. I am not now to shew you, that you was equally mistaken in supposing a consciousness of Free-will in this Act. We are agreed as to the
necessity

* Letter V.

necessity you was under. My business *now* is to shew you—that it was a *charitable* act, the *necessity* of it notwithstanding; or in other words, (but still remember, I speak of NECESSITY according to *your* idea of that term*)—that its being a *necessary* act destroys not its *moral* nature.

But before I do this, and in order to do it with greater satisfaction to yourself, it will be proper to convince you of the inconclusiveness of your argument to prove, that the Morality of the act is necessarily involved and founded in the *consciousness* of LIBERTY, supposing such a consciousness to exist, which however has been disproved.

“A person in great distress applied to you for a sum of money, which would enable him to satisfy a hasty creditor, You complied with his request†” This act, you assert, could not have been a charitable one, if you had not a power of doing otherwise than as you did. Your words are—“Might I not have refused?—Yes, surely; or “else the action could not have been *charitable*.”

Let us suppose then that, instead of complying, you had exerted this notable privilege of FREE-WILL in the *opposite* direction, and that you even

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added insult to your refusal. Would you have acted *charitably* in so doing?—Just the reverse. But how so?—You had the same *free-will* on one supposition as on the other. You repulsed and insulted your petitioner, when you *might* have done otherwise. If Free-will constituted the act charitable in one case, it would in the other.

Nor think, *Philemon*, that I want to puzzle the Cause, and bring myself off with a mere Quibble. All I aim at is, to afford you conviction by shewing you the *nature* and *tendency* of your Assertions. And that you may not think I am for evading the real Question by making suppositions instead of attending to your reasoning, I come now to examine the force of your Argument on this instance.

What *reason* then do you assign, why the act would not have been a charitable one, if you had not been at liberty to have done otherwise?—If I understand you right, (and I do all I can, not only to come at your meaning, but to give it all the force of an *argument* it is capable of) it is this—*Because* it is one of those acts which Conscience applauds; and Conscience, you observe, “never
“ applauds us for such actions as we consider our-
“ selves under a *necessity* to perform.”*

Here I ask—Doth conscience applaud us for *all* actions which we consider ourselves at free liberty to perform?—If it doth, then it will applaud us for *immoral* and *vitious* as well as for moral and virtuous acts; Seeing a vitious act may proceed from FREE-WILL as much as a virtuous one: nay, according to your hypothesis, it cannot be vitious, unless it proceed from FREE-WILL. If, I say, “this same Principle of FREE-WILL be, as you assert*, the *ground* of all moral approbation,” then moral approbation will be equally consequent on *all* free acts. And thus, you see, this same Principle of FREE-WILL destroys all distinction between actions, and raises the worst and basest to the same level with the best and worthiest.

Perhaps you will tell me—I misrepresent your meaning by quoting your expressions imperfectly; for that your assertion is, That the “Principle of FREE-WILL is the ground of all moral approbation and *disapprobation*,” and that “conscience never applauds, or *condemns* us for such actions as we consider ourselves under a necessity to perform.” Be it so. These are indeed your words. If conscience then doth not applaud

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* P. 17.

us for *all* free actions, but only for *some*, and *condemns* us for others equally free, then there must be something *else* than FREE-WILL which is the ground of moral approbation and disapprobation—something else which, constituting an act virtuous or vicious, *qualifies* it (if I may so speak) for the sentence of Conscience; for its applause or condemnation.

To come again therefore to your instance—There must be something which rendered your voluntary compliance with your neighbour's request worthy of approbation and the applause of Conscience, and something which would have rendered a refusal or repulse, though equally voluntary, worthy of *disapprobation* and the reproach of Conscience. And that which renders an act worthy of approbation must surely be *different* from, and even *contrary* to That which renders an act worthy of disapprobation. Can FREE-WILL, which is *one* and the *same* Principle in all actions, have this *different*, this *contrary* effect?—

This must suffice to convince you, that FREEDOM of Will gave not the moral quality to the Act.

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What then, you will now ask me, was it which gave it this Quality—which made it considered as an act of *Charity*?—To return a categorical answer to your Question for a solution of this difficulty, might not be so satisfactory as if I should offer what may enable you to solve it yourself.

Review then, *Philemon*, the Act with the circumstances attending it, as stated by yourself, and present it in its entire form to your mind for its judgment upon it.—“A Neighbour in great distress applied to you for a certain sum of money, which would enable him to satisfy a hasty Creditor. You complied with his request.”—Such is the Act. Such is the Form of it.

Now, I will put an easy Question to you, the Answer to which, I think, will bring you presently in sight of that which we are in quest of.—*Why* did you comply with, rather than reject your neighbour's application?—The Answer can be no other than this, *viz.* *Because* the Petitioner appeared to be in distress, and you wished to relieve his distress. *Therefore* you assisted him with the money. This was your Motive; and this Motive gave the act its moral quality—constituted it a *charitable*

table act. Take away the *motive*, and you annihilate the act, with respect to its *moral* nature. Say that you did it not *with a view* to relieve him, nor was in any degree moved thereto by *compassion* and *fellow-feeling*; and it appears no longer the *charitable* office you named it.

Put now what I have said to the test, *Philemon*. Try if it be possible for you to bring the freest action you can think of with any propriety under the denomination of *charitable*, wanting the *motive*; or if you can consider it at all in a *moral* light on account merely of the FREE-WILL from whence it is supposed to proceed.

Try the experiment in the instance you first brought of your being conscious of Free-will. In that, if in any instance you was possessed of FREE-WILL. Yet supposing this Freedom of Will, doth it render that act in any degree either *moral* or *immoral*?—Because you could have done otherwise; Was it *therefore* either a virtuous or a vitious—a good or a bad—a charitable or an uncharitable action?—Not at all.

But put the case—That the Motive for your writing to me was purely to serve another in some great distress, which I only could relieve. This
would

would have been a *moral*, a *charitable* action, but not the more so for being a *free* action. Both actions are equal in point of Freedom of Will. Yet the one is a charitable action. The other has not the least tincture of Charity.

Having thus, *Philemon*, with great minuteness considered your Argument in favour of FREE-WILL, first, in an instance (as you thought it) of your own *experience* of such a principle, and secondly, in an instance (as you likewise thought it) of this same Principle being involved in our very notions of Morality and being the ground of all moral approbation and disapprobation, will there be any occasion for me to follow you through the train of reasoning, or rather variety of cases which you have produced in confirmation of your Opinion?—This shall be as you please. As you have so ingenuously owned your conviction in one instance, I am desirous it should be accompanied with perfect satisfaction; and I am ready to do all in my power to remove the regret it has occasioned, and to make the Truth appear to you (as it really is) lovely and desirable.

CLEANTHES.

I

LET-

L E T T E R IX.

From *Philemon*.

NO, *Cleanthes*; I see no need of your following me to the end of my long string of cases. It were unnecessary to have troubled you with them but for the sake of illustrating my *meaning*. As to their being in confirmation of my *Argument*, that must be given up. Nothing can confirm what has been *disproved*.

Well then, *Cleanthes*; I have already owned my conviction of the truth of the NECESSITARIAN doctrine. There cannot be that FREE-WILL in Man which I imagined, nay, which I thought myself secure of from my own *Experience*. Nor do I know how to disown my conviction of the force of your reasoning in your last favour.

You have fully refuted the Argument for Free-will, taken from the nature of *moral* actions and their effect upon the human mind. This very *consciousness* of moral rectitude and depravity was to
me

me a plain proof of human LIBERTY. It is no longer so. You have abundantly convinced me, that FREE-WILL is no way connected with this consciousness. The consciousness of a moral rectitude and depravity in human actions is neither a *proof* of the existence of FREE-WILL, nor, supposing such a Principle to exist, can it be the *ground* of any moral approbation and disapprobation.

I see the contradiction in maintaining such a position, and I as clearly discern the consequence of admitting it. This would be to confound the nature of human actions; And if this Principle of FREE-WILL could give the act which I did the Quality of *charitable*, it might equally serve to give it any *other* quality, and even the contrary one of *uncharitable*. The morality of the act therefore must rest upon some *other* basis; And I find myself constrained to admit, that this can be no other than the *Motive* from which the act proceeded.

Thus far I can go with you, *Cleanthes*. But then; if that Motive *necessarily* determined my Will, which according to your reasoning it must

have done, and which I am now convinced it did —if I could not (having such a motive) but act as I did, Where is the *Merit* of the act?—The act was a *charitable* one indeed. The Motive makes it such;—Granted. But where is the Merit of it with respect to *me*?—Do I applaud myself in any other case for doing what I know I *must* do—what I am under an *absolute* necessity of doing?—Or do I ever view with moral approbation the actions of another, however specious, which proceed from *constraint*?—How much soever they may captivate me at first sight with a show of *charity*, for example, or with any other moral appearance, the moment I am informed they were *forced*—that the agent was obliged and *compelled* thereto, my admiration of the character ceases. I see nothing *meritorious* in what he hath done.

Why then, but because I am partial to my own actions, do I judge otherwise in the present case? What I did I was *necessitated* to do, as strictly and *absolutely* so as when I perform any other action in the most *compulsive* manner. I remember your words, *Cleanthes*.—"I except no part of the human conduct. Natural, civil, moral, religious
 " behaviour

“behaviour—*All* is acknowledged to be necessary, and in the *same degree**.”

So then; this moral act was necessary in the same degree as if I had been *compelled* to do it. And if so, what merit was there in *me*, any more than there is in the *Arrow* which, flying in the just direction it received from the Archer, hits the mark at which it was aimed?—Or in a *Watch* which shows indeed the true time, but which cannot do otherwise, the exactness of its movements depending on the necessary disposition and adjustment of its parts?—

You will tell me, perhaps, that I am *conscious* of approving this act of charity, and that I am *conscious* of disapproving the contrary.—But *Cleantes*, may I not be mistaken with respect to this supposed consciousness, as I was with respect to the supposed consciousness of FREE-WILL?—How shall I be certain that I am not deceived?—Once argued out of my Feelings, (may I not say?) what dependence can I have upon them?—Ought I not to distrust them for the future?—Satisfy me, *Cleantes*, that this Consciousness is not delusive, but founded in something *real*; and I shall want little more

more of your assistance to make me quite easy under my conviction, and to *relish* that Doctrine which I have ventured to *recieve*.

PHILEMON.

LET-

L E T T E R X.

From *Cleanthes*.

CONVINCED as you are, *Philemon*, of the Truth of the NECESSITARIAN doctrine—Convinced that it doth not, as you apprehended, confound all the distinctions we make of actions and their qualities; nay, Convinced “that
“to maintain the contrary position would be to
“confound the nature of human actions”—What hinders you from embracing it?—What hinders you from as cordially embracing it as you have nobly rejected the doctrine of FREE-WILL, submitting all your prejudices in its favour, which were strong and of the most respectable kind (if respect can be due to prejudice of any kind) to the authority of Truth and Reason?—

You are still suspicious, it seems, That though NECESSITY doth not subvert the nature of moral actions, yet it leaves no place for *Merit*, or *Demerit*, in the Agent.

What

What if you are but too right in your suspicion, *Philemon*? — Can you mend the matter on the scheme of FREE-WILL?—No. For That (were it admissible) you have owned, confounds the nature of actions and destroys all distinction between what we now call good and bad, moral and immoral, virtuous and vicious actions. And indeed where can be the merit of an action which has no certain, no real moral excellence in it? Or who shall blame me? or why blame myself for doing that which has not in *itself* and in its own nature any moral turpitude?—You see then, that on the principle of FREE-WILL there can be no Merit or Demerit. This, I know, you will readily grant.

But This, you will tell me, satisfies you not. You have rejected the doctrine of FREE-WILL, and are not concerned about *its* consequences. Be it ever so obnoxious for its tendency, this is no recommendation of the doctrine of NECESSITY. Though, in respect of mere *truth*, the apparent falshood of the one sufficiently evinceth the certain existence of the other; yet, you may think, this is not the case where the *consequences* are in question. From the pernicious tendency of the
the

the one we are not warranted to infer a contrary tendency in the other.

I grant all this, *Philemon*. Nor do I want you to admit the inference on any such comparison, or to make you think the worse of the doctrine of FREE-WILL that you may be disposed to think the better of the Principles of the NECESSITARIAN. However, I wait for your express acknowledgment—That, as the doctrine of FREE-WILL destroys all distinction between actions by annihilating or perverting the moral nature of them, so it can leave no foundation for attributing any merit or demerit to the Agent. Be not alarmed, *Philemon*, that I make this a preliminary article to any farther discussion of the point in question; Nor fear that a Concession is going to be extorted from you which will be employed in an unfair manner by

CLEANTHES.

K

LET.

L E T T E R XI.

From *Philemon*.

I Might have found some reluctance in acceding to the mysterious Terms sent me, had they come from any other than *Cleanthes*. With perfect confidence however in the fairness of the Proposer's intentions, I resign myself to his direction for the management of this Inquiry. One with whom Truth is sacred would not seek to avail himself of an hasty Concession, or propose any Plan of proceeding but with a view to the more accurate investigation or the more orderly and satisfactory communication of Truth.

In this confidence my answer to your Demand, *Cleanthes*, shall be as explicit as you can desire. I do admit —that “FREE-WILL leaves no foundation for attributing merit or demerit to the “Agent” for doing what are called the *best* or the *worst* actions. Because it destroys all distinction in actions. *Best* and *worst* are terms without a meaning, applied to actions without a mora!

Motive ;

Motive; And there can be no Merit in the performance of what is not good in *itself* or its own nature, nor Demerit in doing what is not in *itself* bad.

But still—(as you observe for me, *Cleanthes*) this is not satisfactory. I have done with FREE-WILL. It existeth not. And why be solicitous about the consequences of a Non-entity?—I am now a NECESSITARIAN. Whither my *new* Principles lead, is now my concern. If *Merit* and *Demerit* are words without a meaning on the principle of FREE-WILL, are they not equally senseless, when applied to actions which proceed from *force, constraint, absolute Necessity*?—Am I conscious of any merit in doing such actions?—Or if I think I am, may not that Consciousness be merely imaginary?—I have still therefore to ask—Where is the merit of a *necessary* Act?—Where is the merit of it with respect to me, who am a *necessary* Agent—who could not *but* do it?—

These are my difficulties. How you will employ the Concession you have obtained from me towards a satisfactory solution of them, I cannot see, and wait with some impatience to learn.

PHILEMON.

K 2

L E T.

L E T T E R XII.

From *Cleanthes*.

NO compliments, *Philemon*. The Cause of Truth, which with Philosophers should be ever sacred, is hazarded amid much complaisance, as well as in the heat of contentious debate. Straight therefore to your Concession—A mighty one truly ! After you had been reduced to own, that the foundation of morality is subverted on the principle of FREE-WILL, to concede to me this farther point, *viz.* That it leaves no foundation for *Merit* ! What a struggle you must have had with yourself, before you could venture *so far* with me* ! What a confidence in the fairness of your Opponent†, to yield him this advantage of ground !

To speak seriously, *Philemon* ; The Concession is quite unimportant. “How so ?” I hear you say. “Why then seek to obtain it from me ?

Why

* P. 59.

† P. 66.

Why demand it with so much formality? Why insist upon it as an indispensable preliminary to any farther proceeding? Why caution me against being alarmed at such a Demand?"—Not, that I thought it of importance, I can assure you, *Philemon*; or wished thus to extort from you what I might suppose you would hesitate to grant. I knew you would *readily* grant it. I told you as much. But I used this *art* (nor think I have thereby forfeited your confidence—you shall find it still in your favour) to make it appear to *you* consequential. You might not else have examined it with sufficient care. You might neither have satisfied *yourself*, nor have imparted to *me* your conviction of the *reasonableness* of the Concession. For it was not the *concession*, but the *ground* on which you make it, which I waited for, and which I now mean to employ in the argument.

You grant then, *Philemon*, that on the doctrine of FREE-WILL there can be no foundation for attributing Merit or Demerit to an Agent. But *why* not?—What is there in that Doctrine which precludes him from all pretension to Merit, or others from all right to censure?—The reason

you

you give (and it is the true reason) is, *because* “it destroys all distinction between actions,” *good* and *bad* being terms without a meaning, when applied to actions without a moral motive, &c. If then it did *not* destroy, but preserve this distinction between actions—if we could, consistently with the supposition of FREE-WILL, admit that there is in human actions a moral difference, that some are justly denominated *good* and *virtuous*, others *bad* and *vitious*, then it would leave a certain foundation for attributing that merit or demerit to the agent, which you find it impossible to attribute with any consistency on that supposition.

Now, on the principle of NECESSITY this distinction between actions takes place. There *is*, (you will allow it) a moral difference between them, notwithstanding their being *necessary* actions. The Doctrine of NECESSITY doth that which the Doctrine of FREE-WILL doth not. By leaving the foundation of Morality secure it leaves a foundation for Merit and Demerit, *viz.* the moral nature of actions. That which gives the action its *moral Quality* gives it at the same time its *worth* or *merit*. Nor can the Action be meritorious, and the Agent be considered as void of Merit in
doing

doing it. Indeed, properly speaking, the merit is in the *Agent* rather than in the *Action*. It was kind, we say, it was charitable, it was candid *in the Man*. Because the Motive which constituted the act morally what it was, actuated the *Man*. It was *his* act, his own voluntary act. It was also a *moral* act, proceeded from his own *worthy disposition*—from a kind, charitable, or candid motive. Can we forbear attributing the merit of it to *him*?—

Let us now apply this to the solution of your difficulty, keeping still to the same Instance. The act, you say, “was a charitable one indeed. The “Motive makes it such. Granted. But where “is the merit of it with respect to *me*?”—I answer—The merit of it is where the *morality* of it is—i. e.—in the *motive*. And where is that but in *yourself*, who are the *Agent*?—Who else should have the merit of the action but the Person who doth it?—To refer to your Concession—

If the Act had proceeded from FREE-WILL without any moral motive determining the Will or actuating the Man, it would not by your Concession have been meritorious. In other words *You* would not have had any merit in doing it,
and

and for this reason, *viz.* because it would not in that case have been a *good* action. If then on the principle of FREE-WILL this would not have been a good action, and for that very reason no merit could be justly attributed to You the Agent, it must follow that on the principle of NECESSITY, *viz.* proceeding from a charitable motive, it is so far a *good* action, and for that very reason—because it is a good action—is meritorious with respect to You; in other Words, *You* have the Merit of having done an act of Charity. That which gave it its *moral* Quality gave it its *worth* (if I may so speak) at the same time, with all that effect which it has upon the mind of the *Agent* in self-applause—in the pleasing consciousness of what he has done, and upon the minds of *others* in their approbation of the act and esteem of the Agent.

Is this reasoning satisfactory to you, *Philemon*? Or do you perceive any flaw in it?—I have formed my argument, you observe, on the *reason* you gave for admitting, that FREE-WILL leaves no foundation for Merit or Demerit in human actions. To obtain your sentiments on this point I have owned using some *art*. Have I availed myself of it unfairly?—If after the most rigorous consideration

sideration upon it you may think so, you are at liberty to retract your Concession. I wish not to hurry you into assent. I care not how jealous you are of being misled; and I desire no more of your confidence than to be intrusted with your genuine feelings. Disguise not these, and I will not abuse your confidence. But if you suppress them out of distrust, you put it out of my power (let me be ever so ingenuous with you) to give you the satisfaction you desire. .

CLEANTHES.

L

LET.

L E T T E R XIII.

From *Philemon*.

IS it fair, *Cleanthes*, to banter one upon that very caution and wariness for which you are so strenuous an Advocate, and which you have ever recommended as so essentially requisite in the pursuit of Truth?—I cannot however take it amiss. Every thing, I am assured, is meant in my own favour; And I must have deserved it in some measure, and been too much upon the reserve with my friend, if *Cleanthes* found it necessary to use *art* in order to come at my real sentiments. But I am running insensibly into compliment, and shall have all my Civility and Encomiums returned with reproof or banter. To the point then—

“ You care not, you say, how jealous I am
“ of being misled.” Well, *Cleanthes*, I have
rigorously taken myself to task for what I may
have inconsistently admitted, and strictly scruti-
nized

nized the use you have made of it. All however (I must confess it) appears perfectly *safe* on my part, and *fair* and *firm* on yours. I see no danger in what I have granted; Nor can I spy any flaw in your Argument. I have therefore nothing to *retract*, nor any thing to *object* to your reasoning. The Conclusion you draw from what you had *proved* and from what was *granted* you, seems just and solid—"That the moral Quality of an act gives it its worth and that effect which it has upon the mind of the Agent as well as upon those that contemplate it. This conclusion, I say, I know not how to deny. Its premises are certain. It flows regularly from those premises.

Yet, while the Argument is conclusive and affords *conviction*, there wants something to make it perfectly *satisfactory* to me. This same Consciousness of having done a worthy action, how shall I be certain that it is real and not delusive?—Have patience with me, *Cleanthes*, if I repeat my request, that you would satisfy me in this point. You know what reason I have to be suspicious of any argument which is drawn from *Consciousness* or my own *Feelings*.

PHILEMON.

L 2

L E T.

L E T T E R XIV.

From *Cleanthes*.

IS not that man unreasonable, *Philemon*, whom neither Reasoning which he cannot confute, which proceeds on his own principles, nay, which appears to himself conclusive, nor the testimony of his own Feelings will satisfy?—So we are apt to judge. And were the contest between us for fame and not for truth, I should probably (as is generally done) claim the victory on your own confession of being *convinced*, and concern myself no farther about the *dissatisfaction* you still express with what has been proved. But that is not the case, *Philemon*. Between us there is *now* at least no Contest. You are not engaged in the Defence of an opinion which I am contesting. But you apply to me for a solution of certain difficulties attending a Doctrine concerning the truth of which we are agreed; And I am engaged to give you,

as

as far as lies in my power, the Satisfaction you desire.

Thus then, *Philemon*, I again attempt it in the present case. It has been proved—That the Action which you did, when you relieved the distressed petitioner, was a *charitable* action, though a *necessary* one. Nay, it has been shown—That the very Property which according to your idea of NECESSITY constituted it *necessary*, viz. the determining Motive, constituted it *charitable*. It has been admitted by you (and the Concession on the most careful reconsideration you find no reason to retract) That with respect to you the Agent, this Act could have no Merit in it *without* this determining Motive; No act being meritorious on the principle of FREE-WILL for this reason—because it excludes this necessary determination of the mind by moral Motives. It followed therefore incontrovertibly (and you have the ingenuoufness to acknowledge it) — That this Motive though a *necessary* motive (observe!) which gave it its moral Quality, gave it at the same time its *worth*—made it a *good* action—was the *ground* of that esteem which it must meet with from others, and
of

of that self-applause which accrues to the Agent from the consciousness of having done it.

This reasoning *convinceth*, it seems, but doth not *satisfy*. What am I to do here?—What method must be taken to afford you the satisfaction you desire?—To illustrate the argument by putting it in a different point of view will not suffice for this. It convinceth already. It cannot, do what I will with the argument, do more than convince you. To prove its solidity an hundred different ways would be only to leave you where you are, *convinced* but *dissatisfied*.

The truth is, *Philemon* ; you are not dissatisfied with *my* Argument (for where there is conviction, there must be so far satisfaction) but with an argument of *your own* creating, if I may so say. Your doubt is concerning a Position which *I* have not laid down as certain, but which is the suggestion of your own thoughts ; And you are suspicious of being misled by a train of reasoning which is employed only in your own imagination. You doubt, Whether you are conscious of having done a worthy action in relieving the Man's distress. Let me ask you—Did I advance any such a Proposition

position as that of which you profess to doubt?—Or did I reason from it?—Was my inference drawn from this Consciousness?—Did I argue thus?—You are *conscious* of approving the act as meritorious: THEREFORE it is meritorious?—Nothing like it, *Philemon*. The Merit of the Act was proved *independently* of any such Consciousness. Whether this Consciousness exist or not—be real or only delusive—You shall be satisfied in due time. But it is quite another Question to that which I have undertaken to answer for the present, and should be kept distinct from it. Permit me to make sure of one thing, before I pass on to another. This is the way in which I can soonest bring you the satisfaction you desire.

You asked——“Where is the Merit of the act with respect to Me?”—This is the Point we are now upon. My answer is (and it rests upon convincing proof)——The Merit of the act is grounded upon the *motive* which actuated you, or consisteth in your being determined by a good motive.

Send me word, without perplexing yourself about what is not immediately to the purpose,
Whether

Whether this Answer be just and satisfactory. If it be; then you are *satisfied*—That on the principle of NECESSITY there is a sure Foundation for Merit and Demerit in human Agency.

CLEANTHES.

LET

L E T T E R XV.

From *Philemon*.

I find, *Cleantes*, there is no outrunning you. It is well for me that there is not. I acknowledge the seasonableness of the check I have received from my prudent Conductor. I was entering a labyrinth of self-perplexity. My sage Mentor calls me back, and will not suffer me to stray from him.

In plain terms, *Cleantes*,—I mean to thank you for the pains you take to keep the Question clear of adventitious matter, and to blame myself for wantonly deviating from the light of my own Conviction. For I am *convinced* (it has been *satisfactorily* proved) “That on the principle of
“ NECESSITY there is a sure foundation for Merit
“ and Demerit in human Agency;” the Merit of an Agent consisting in his being *determined* by a *good* Motive,

M

Your

Your Answer therefore to my first Quære—
“Where is the merit of the act with respect to
“me?”—is just, is *satisfactory*; whatever is to
become of my other Doubts. I leave them how-
ever in good hands, and submit them to be dis-
posed of in the order *Cleanthes* may think most
proper and most likely to satisfy his Friend

PHILEMON.

LET-

L E T T E R XVI.

From *Cleanthes*.

YOU are *satisfied* then, *Philemon*, of this truth—"That the doctrine of NECESSITY neither subverts the principles of Morality, nor detracts from the Merit of acting upon those Principles." This you are certain of. It has been *demonstratively* proved in the Instance we have been considering, *viz.* an act of *charity* done by yourself; an Act which indeed you are *conscious* of approving, but the merit of which has been proved *independently* of that Consciousness; And with good reason so proved. For this Consciousness is not the *ground* of its Merit. If it was, it might have been proper, nay, it would have been incumbent upon me *first* to have satisfied you of the reality of that Consciousness on which the merit of the act was grounded. But the *motive* which influenced you to the act is the ground of

its merit. The Consciousness was *consequent* to the act. It did not *constitute* the act or any part of it. The act was done and appeared in its compleat form, before Conscience had any thing to do with it. And according to the form or moral nature which it had, such was the verdict of Conscience.

Change the *formal* nature of the act—Deprive it of its *moral* quality, and see what becomes of this Consciousness. Put the case—That you lent the money *not* with a view to relieve the man's distress, but merely to serve yourself in hopes of having it returned with interest. You are conscious of having done *an* Act; but you are not conscious of having done a *worthy* act. You are not conscious of approving the act as kind, charitable, compassionate, or indeed of any *moral merit* in doing it. Because Consciousness *follows* and doth not *precede* or *cause* the existence of that which is the Object of it.

But restore to the act its *moral* Quality, the kind Intention, the charitable motive which determined you to supply the man with the money requested; And you become conscious of *merit* in the act, or
of

of having done a worthy act. The Motive (in which the merit of the Act consisteth) existing, there ariseth in consequence of it the Consciousness in question.

This, I think, is sufficient, *Philemon*, to convince you both of the *reality* of this Consciousness, and also of the propriety of postponing any attempt to satisfy your doubts concerning its reality, till I had convinced you of the reality of *THAT* from whence this consciousness arose. "Satisfy
 " me, you say, that this consciousness is not de-
 " lusive, but founded in something real; and I
 " shall want little more of your assistance to make
 " me quite easy*, &c."—But was it likely I should succeed in convincing you that it was founded in *something real*, before I had convinced you that the *Merit* of the act from whence this consciousness arises, is itself a reality?—But *That* being proved to be real, you can no longer doubt the reality of *This*. To be certain that you are not imposed upon in this case—that there is nothing delusive in this Consciousness of Merit—You have only to consider, Whether you are conscious of having acted *so* as the case is put. If you are certain of
that—

* Page 61.

that—If you know that you complied with the man's request, and are conscious of having acted therein from *such* a Motive (and surely you cannot doubt the reality of that consciousness) then you are conscious of having done a meritorious act; the Merit or Demerit of an act being proved to consist in the *view* with which the Agent doth it.

Is this *satisfactory*, PHILEMON?—Can you after this entertain a doubt about the *reality* of this Consciousness, of having done a worthy or *meritorious* act in relieving a distressed person?—If you do doubt it, then you must doubt, Whether you was really conscious of *having* that motive for doing it, which, it is granted, constitutes the merit of the Act.

CLEANTHES.

L E T.

L E T T E R XVII.

From *Philemon*.

YES, *Cleanthes*. It is perfectly satisfactory both in the *Manner* of conducting the Argument and in the *Issue* of it. There can be no Delusion in this case. That which proceeds from an act must be as *real* and certain as the Act itself. To doubt the reality of this *consciousness* is to doubt, Whether I really *did* the Act, or whether the Act was *really* what it is supposed to be;—in other words, and to keep to our instance—to doubt, Whether in supplying the Man with the money I acted upon the principle supposed, or was actuated by a charitable motive.

It is not (I plainly see it) this Consciousness which *makes* the act good and meritorious; but the Goodness or Worth of the Act (which itself depends upon the determining motive is the *ground* of that Consciousness: Or (to speak with that accuracy with which you have expressed yourself,
and

and which, if I had duly attended to it, might have prevented much of my confusion and perplexity) “That which gives an act its moral Quality, gives it its *Worth* at the same time, with all that *Effect* which it has upon the mind of the Agent in self-applause—a pleasing consciousness of what he has done—and upon the minds of others in the approbation of the Act and esteem of the Agent.”

What then is left me to object to the doctrine of NECESSITY?—What is there, after all this conviction, which can possibly leave me *dissatisfied* with the Principles of a NECESSITARIAN?—Has it not been proved, irrefragably proved, That the Foundation of Morality and Religion (for *religious* and *pious* as well as moral actions must take their Quality from, and be constituted what they are by the *motives* from whence they flow) rests secure upon the principle of NECESSITY?—So far from confounding or destroying, doth it not support and preserve the distinctions we make of Actions and their Qualities, of good and bad, right and wrong, virtuous and vicious, worthy and unworthy, pious and profane?—Have you not shown

me—

me—That an action can have no worth but on the supposition of a motive determining the Will? and That an Agent uninfluenced thereby could neither be capable of self-applause for any actions he should do; nor could merit applause and esteem from others?—You have shewn it, *Cleanthes*, to my conviction, to my entire *satisfaction*.

“Why then,” you will ask me, “don’t you cordially embrace a Doctrine which is not only founded in Truth and Fact, but recommends itself moreover in the view of its *consequences*?”—

I *do* embrace it cordially, *Cleanthes*. I see that all which can be the object of a good man’s wishes, must be safe upon it, and that all his Fears and Apprehensions for the interests of Virtue are groundless. These fears and apprehensions are no longer with *me*. They are fled before the light of Truth.

I have still my Difficulties, it is true. But they are nothing in the face of your Argument. Nor are they mentioned as *Objections* to it, or as affecting me with the least doubt of the justness of your Conclusion. For that which is once proved—that which rests upon *demonstration*—is secure against every objection, and secures one against all doubts.

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But

But still, *Cleantes*; though these Difficulties neither ought nor can prevent conviction, yet it would *add* to my satisfaction, to obtain by the removal of them a more distinct and clear view of the Subject. This indeed I confidently promise myself to obtain in a personal conference with you, relying on your known readiness to indulge me with your sentiments in the most unreserved manner on every point in which Truth is concerned.

Allow me however, *Cleantes*, to protract this epistolary correspondence already through my confused ideas drawn to too great a length, by the proposal of only one more Query, *viz.*—Seeing we never attribute Merit to a man for doing any thing which proceeds from force and constraint; How am I to reconcile the Consciousness of having acted under *force* and *constraint* in what I did, with this Consciousness of having acted notwithstanding *meritoriously*?

PHILEMON.

L E T.

L E T T E R XVIII.

From *Cleanthes*.

“**T**HEY are fled before the light of truth.”
 Yes, *Philemon*. For it was not TRUTH
 (as I told you) but ERROR that afflicted you with
 these unnecessary fears, when she dictated to you
 —“NECESSITY subverts every principle of Mo-
 “rality and Religion, confounds all the Distinc-
 “tions we make of Actions and their Qualities,
 “of good and bad, right and wrong, virtuous
 “and vicious, lawful and unlawful, pious and
 “prophane, &c*.”

But what is This which still hangs like a mist
 over the subject, and prevents your seeing *Truth*
 as she is—“How am I to reconcile the consciouf-
 “ness of having acted under *force* and *constraint*
 “in what I did, with this conscioufness of having
 “acted notwithstanding *meritoriously*?—Seeing we
 “never attribute *Merit* to a Man for doing any

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“ thing

* P. 44.

“ thing which proceeds from *force* and *constraint*.”

How is this, *Philemon*?—Are you conscious then of having acted under *force* and *constraint* in what you did?—If so, I have misunderstood you all this while, and been arguing upon a misstated case. I have gone upon the supposition that you was entirely free from any thing like *force* and *constraint* in what you did—that the Act was *voluntary*, not constrained—proceeded from *choice*, not from force—from *yourself*, not from another—that no *Violence* was used to *force* you to do it, nor any Threats to *awe* you into compliance—that it was, in short, an Act of pure *good-will* dictated by compassion and a desire of relieving the man's distress, not by any meaner motive, either slavish compliance with the will of another, or the sordid expectation of a mercenary return. And was not this the case, *Philemon*? Was not such your motive in the act?—It was. Nor could you be conscious of any other motive determining you to act the part you did, than *that* which *constituted* the act a charitable one, and in constituting it such rendered it *meritorious* with respect to you.

See

See then, *Philemon*, how clear the matter is in itself, which you have perplexed by imagining a Consciousness of something which did not, which *could* not exist, in the case as it was stated. You was conscious, when you complied with your Neighbour's request, of being actuated by *good-will*, by a pure disinterested desire of affording relief, and by that *only*. Now, has it not been proved—Doth it not stand upon record in your very last Epistle*, that this Motive, this pure Desire unmixed with any other motive or view, is that which gives the Act its moral Quality, and consequently its moral Worth and *Merit*?—Nay, did not the Consciousness you speak of—of having acted meritoriously—result from a sense or consciousness of your being free from any *other* influence, from any thing whatsoever which could be a *force* upon your inclination, or might make it not your own *choice* to act as you did?—You could not therefore be conscious of acting under *force* and *constraint* in this case; unless you will call acting *voluntarily*, of *choice*, with your own *full* and *free consent* and *good will*, acting under *force* and *constraint*; or unless you will say that an act, which you are conscious proceeded from *yourself* and

* P. 88.

and your own *consent*, you are at the same time conscious proceeded from *force* and *constraint*.

Or will you say, that you are conscious of having acted under force and constraint, because you acted by *Necessity*, by a necessary determination of the will—that having such a *Motive*, so *determinative* of the Will, you was as much forced and constrained to the act as a *Stone* is to fall to the ground by the force of Gravity, or a *Watch*, to shew the hour by the force of its spring and its other internal powers of Mechanism?—Say so, *Philemon*. Make use of such language as you think fit. Only be so far consistent in the Terms you use as that you may be *understood*, and understand yourself, being clear in the ideas you affix to them.

You acted then, we will say, under *force* and *constraint*. But then let me ask you—Did you act under that *kind* of force by which a Stone falls to the ground, or that *mechanical* force by which the movements of a Watch are regulated?—If so; You was indeed equally with them void of all moral merit. But on the contrary did you act under any *other* force or constraint, than that of *kindness* and *compassion*?—If you did not (and so the case is put)—if you are conscious to yourself
of

of having acted under no *other* force or constraint than *this*; then where is the Difficulty of reconciling the Consciousness of this *kind* of force and constraint in what you did, with the consciousness of having acted *meritoriously*?—"Seeing we never
"hesitate to attribute merit to a man for doing
"any thing which proceeds from force and con-
"straint" of *this kind*—that is—in the Instance before us, the merit of having acted charitably in relieving a distressed person, forced and constrained thereto by a pure motive of *Compassion* and *Fellow-feeling*.

And now, *Philemon*, if I mistake not, You begin to perceive, how far the Dispute concerning HUMAN LIBERTY is a Question about *words*, and consequently how much the successful determination of it depends upon precision of language and accurately distinguishing between the Terms made use of in the discussion of it. However, when I call it a Question about Words, I mean, as it is *generally* treated. For with *us* it has not been such. It ceases to be a Question about words, when the Disquisitors understand each other, and join issue upon a state of the question founded in a clear definition of the Terms of the Subject.

The

The Argument has been conducted upon *one and the same* ground, viz. upon your own acceptance of the terms, LIBERTY and NECESSITY. I refer you to the preliminary part of our correspondence for the very different idea which I affix to those Terms*. What then?—It matters not how widely we differ, provided we carry not that difference into the *Dispute*, if we but take care to settle it previously to the discussion, to treat the subject and decide the question on one and the same idea of its state. This has been done. And by keeping you to the Question as stated on your own idea of LIBERTY and NECESSITY, I have been enabled to bring the matter to a decision—that is—to convince and *satisfy* you that in *your* sense of NECESSITY every thing is necessary, and that the foundation of Morality is secure on the doctrine of NECESSITY.

The thing itself is proved, which was in the *Question*. But whether your acceptance of the word—*necessity*—as including the determination of the Will by *motives*, and applied to *voluntary* Acts, be proper or not; this was not in the *Question*. You would not admit it. You had not
patience

* Letter IV.

patience to make it a question, whether “one of
“ *my principles* might not call voluntary actions
“ *free actions*, and doing as you will, acting with
“ *freedom**.” This therefore is still a Questionable
point between us, which, with many terms and
expressions relative to the Subject, shall, if you
please, *Philemon*, be submitted for discussion in
personal conference.

In the mean time, it may serve to throw some
general light upon the Subject, to advert to the
cause of your present Difficulty. I thus account
for it—You have applied the words *force* and
constraint in a *literal* sense to the human Will, to
which they cannot be applied, except *metaphori-*
cally or in *allusion*; the former in its literal sense
being applicable to and respecting the power by
which *inanimate* matter is moved; the latter, to
the power by which we are moved and determined
in common with *mere* animals. It is true that,
when you did the Act of Charity which has been
under our consideration, you was as *necessarily*
moved thereto as a Stone is moved, when it falls
to the ground by the force of gravity, or as the
Index of a Watch is moved by the force of the
O Spring

Spring. But you was not moved *involuntarily*, as they are. *They* have no *will*, *choice*, nor *consent* in their motions. *You* acted not only *voluntarily*, but with your own *choice* and *consent*. You was not therefore properly speaking (nay indeed, to speak but *intelligibly*) under *force* and *constraint* in what you did ; these being Terms inapplicable to matters of *choice*.

But “do we not,” perhaps you will ask, “express ourselves properly and intelligibly, when we speak of the *force* of Love, Desire, Parental Affection, &c ?—and of being *constrained* to do such a thing through Fear, Hope, Love, Pity, Regard for, Esteem of, and the like ?”—We do so. And the reason is—In expressions of this kind the Motive itself being mentioned (which hath always a *literal* sense only) sufficiently illustrates our meaning and prevents all ambiguity in the Terms to which it is joined, and any confusion in our ideas concerning the *nature* of the force and constraint signified. The addition of the Motive is, as it were, a *Definition* of those terms, and serves to convey unequivocally the Idea we affix to them. And do you now, *Philemon*, define that
force

force and constraint you speak of by adding the *motive* which actuated you, *viz. kindness or compassion*; And you will perhaps smile at the Simplicity of your Query, as well as at the unnecessary Prolixity of the Solver. At all times and on all occasions, in which Truth and your pursuit of it are concerned,

Your's to command

CLEANTHES.

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LET-

L E T T E R XIX.

From *Philemon*.

“**A**RE you conscious then of having acted
“under force and constraint in what you
“did?” — This Question, *Cleanthes*, darted
into my mind a Suspicion of what might occasion
my embarrassment. You needed not have added
more to convince me—at least, to put me in a sure
way of convincing myself—that all my difficulty
arose from an abuse of Language.

I am appealed to, Whether I am conscious that
I acted under *force* and *constraint* in what I did.
To decide upon this, I consult my own feelings
on a review of the Act. I find that I was free
from any force or constraint *ab extra*, at least.
How was I affected from *within* then?—Was I
actuated by *fear* or any other motive which *con-*
strained me to act against my *Will*, as we say, a-
gainst my own *consent*, against my own *choice*?—

No.

No. I certainly chose to do it. I acted from choice. But did I not act *necessarily*?—Was not my Will *determined, necessarily* determined by a Motive?—This is no less certain. I was moved by *Fellow-feeling, Compassion, a Desire* to relieve my neighbour's distress. And shall I call this *force, and constraint*?—Shall I say—I was *forced and constrained* to do that which I *desired, which I chose, which I wished* to do?—It is a manifest perversion of language to call it by such names. I cannot any longer hesitate to answer to this Appeal to my own feelings—"I am *not* conscious of having acted under *force and constraint* in what I did."

Thus did I deliberate with myself and decide upon your Appeal, before I passed on to the other parts of your letter; in reading which to say that I am fully confirmed in the result of the above Soliloquy, would be to give you a very inadequate idea of the effect it had upon me. I begin to feel the force and importance of those *distinctions* to which you have so often, in vain, called my attention. They are not those affected *refinements* upon words which I took them for. They are not mere *subtleties* devised for the purpose of evasion

evasion and——But I blush, my Friend, to recollect the light in which I considered, and the levity with which I treated them.

I plainly perceive it was never your intention to rest the foundation of Morality and Religion upon *that* Necessity to which the motions of mere matter are subject; nor yet upon *that* necessity by which the brute creatures are swayed in all their motions, but upon *that* determination of the Will by *motives*, of which neither Matter nor the inferior Creatures are in any degree capable—upon *that capacity* or (to abide by our definition) “*power* in Man of chusing to act, forbear action, “ or continue action” on moral and religious motives, with which he *alone* in this lower creation is endowed. This Power of acting, peculiar to Man, distinguishes him, in this respect, from the inferior Creatures—constitutes him a MORAL Agent—renders him accountable for his Conduct as such; and therefore why not conform to your language (I begin to think it may be proper) and denominate him a FREE AGENT?—But this, as it shall appear under your illustration, and when tried by the just rules of philosophizing.

And

And now, *Cleanthes*—the Argument being closed and Truth placed out of danger from compliment, I am at liberty to tell you, how much I esteem and even venerate you for the regard you have invariably shewn for, and that dignity and unreservedness with which you have vindicated the cause of TRUTH. But I will spare you on this head, and only thank you (with *this* you cannot be offended) for your compliance with my request in this Epistolary correspondence and most patient attendance upon me under all my Embarrassment. Farewell.

PHILEMON.

THE END.

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